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To cite this article: Siviwe Bangani, Mathew Moyo & Sabelo Chizwina (2017) Interlending Services: Trends, Languages, and use for Collection Development at North-West University, Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserve, 26:3-5, 157-179, DOI: [10.1080/1072303X.2018.1472164](https://doi.org/10.1080/1072303X.2018.1472164)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1072303X.2018.1472164>



Published online: 29 May 2018.



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Interlending Services: Trends, Languages, and use for Collection Development at North-West University

Siviwe Bangani ^a, Mathew Moyo^a, and Sabelo Chizwina^b

^aLibrary and Information Services, North-West University, Mafikeng, South Africa; ^bLibrary and Information Services, University of Technology, Free State (CUT), Bloemfontein, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This paper uses the bibliometrics methods to analyse the interlending service trends, language and collection development at the North-West University. The results show that despite some challenges, ILS services at the NWU decreased. More than 98.5% of all documents requested are in English language followed by Setswana and Afrikaans. Out of the 535 books requested by the Mafikeng Campus, 138 were added to the collection of the library. These results point to a need for academic libraries in Africa to adopt strategies for the development of African languages. The results support the continued use of ILS data for collection development purposes.

KEYWORDS

Collection development;
document supply;
interlending; interlibrary;
language; resource sharing

1. Introduction

Academic libraries in South Africa face challenges (Committee of Higher Education Libraries in South Africa, Library and Information Science Association of South Africa, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science & the South African National Library and information Consortium, 2014). While the need for information resources has been growing in the past few years, it has not been accompanied by any positive adjustments to library budgets. Universities grapple with the effects of the decreasing subsidies from the South African government (Universities South Africa, 2017), student protests (Quintal, 2015), addition of the Value Added Tax (VAT) on electronic resources (Dean & Myeza, 2017), and the negative global financial outlook (Webster & Moyo, 2016). As if these were not enough, the rate of VAT increased from 14% to 15% in 2018 in the country (Ensor, 2018). Faced with these mounting challenges, academic libraries canceled some resources and relied on interlending services (ILS) (Dean & Myeza, 2017) for some of their users' information needs. Feather and Sturges (1997, p. 231) define ILS as a complementary service of borrowing and/or lending of library material by one library and/or branch library to the other mainly with no direct financial benefits

CONTACT Siviwe Bangani  Siviwe.Bangani@gmail.com  North-West University Library and Information Services, Mafikeng Campus, Corner of Albert Luthuli and University Drive, Mmabatho 2745, Mafikeng, South Africa. Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/WILD.

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accrued by the lending library. ILS in this paper is used to refer to the Intercampus Resources Sharing (IRS), which are loans between the campuses and/or branches of North-West University Library and Information Services (NWU LIS), and Inter-library Loans (ILL), which are loans between libraries of different institutions and organizations. Both services involve one library lending and/or borrowing from another library for the benefit of the users (Feather & Sturges, 1997, p. 231).

Knieval, Wicht, and Connaway (2006) advocates for the use of interlending data in libraries as a tool for collection development during lean times. This is to ensure maximum impact with the limited resources at their disposal. In the case of South Africa, this is further complicated by the constitutional obligations to ensure equity of access to information (Raubenheimer & Niekerk, 2015; South Africa, 1996), in the preferred official language of the users (South Africa, 1996). In the context of South Africa, ILS does not only act as a service to fill the gap in the collections of different libraries, but they are also the greatest equalizer between different libraries. ILS can be thought of as playing a key role in redress given the history of colonialism and apartheid that left the country divided into information haves and information have nots. In South Africa, ILS assumes a crucial role to close the gap between the poorer libraries and the privileged libraries from the affluent areas and institutions. It can be linked to the African philosophical concept of Ubuntu, which encapsulates sharing (Raju, Claassen, & Moll, 2017).

This paper continues the analysis of data from a case study of interlibrary loan services at NWU that identified a decrease in trends of ILL at this university over an 11-year period (Bangani, Chizwina, & Moyo, 2018). In addition to the introduction, this paper is divided into nine sections, which are the purpose of ILS, the context of the study, objectives, literature review, methodology, findings, limitations, conclusion, and recommendations.

2. The purpose of interlending services

According to the American Library Association (2016), the purposes of ILS are to:

- complement the collections of libraries,
- leverage library resources of different libraries,
- cushion academic libraries against the impact of financial constraints,
- use borrowing data from ILS for collection development purposes, and
- obtain materials that are owned by the local library but are damaged, missing, or checked out.

ILS is not meant to replace the collection development obligations of libraries but it is a service that is both complementary and reciprocal. This means that libraries lend material to other libraries based on an agreement that the other library would do the same to them. Reciprocity in this context should not be taken to mean direct reciprocity. It may simply be a desire on the side of the borrowing library to lend the lending library material in future, if the borrowing library so desires. Even if the desire to borrow material from the lending library does not arise, this is still regarded as ILS as long as each library would normally lend the other library material in its collection when requested (American Library Association, 2016).

3. Context

3.1. *South African public universities*

The South African education system has always been a microcosm of developments in the political environment within which it operates. During apartheid, the education system was divided along racial lines with separate universities for Blacks, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003, p. 79). The separate development ensured that the White universities had better resources compared to their Indian, Coloured, and Black counterparts. The majority of the Black universities were based in the “homeland states” such as Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Venda, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and QwaQwa. Each “homeland” was assigned to a specific ethnic group. This meant that universities were developed along those racial as well as ethnic lines, with the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (CHE) regarded as a White Afrikaans University, while the University of Bophuthatswana (later University of North-West) was designated as a Batswana university. When an inclusive democratic government was formed in 1994, the country was now divided into nine provinces, which are Eastern Cape (EC), Free State (FS), Gauteng (GP), Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), Limpopo (LP), Mpumalanga (MP), Northern Cape (NC), North West (NW), and Western Cape (WC) Provinces. In order to deal with the apartheid structure of the universities and to ensure the sharing of resources between the formerly White privileged universities and the poorly funded Black universities, the then department of education decided to merge some universities in 2002. The results of these mergers would lead to three types of universities which are comprehensive universities, traditional universities, and universities of technology (South Africa, 2002a). The NWU was thus born out of a merger between the then University of North-West, and CHE, with students and staff of the Sebokeng Campus of the former Vista University incorporated into the merger, resulting in three campuses, which are the Mafikeng Campus (MC), Potchefstroom Campus (PC), and Vaal Triangle Campus (VTC). The mergers led to the reduction of the number of universities from 36 to 23. However, the number of universities in the country increased in 2014/15 after the establishment of the Mpumalanga University, Sol Plaatje University, and the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. The later as a result of the demerger of the University of Limpopo. [Table 1](#) is a list of all public universities in South Africa.

3.2. *The collection policy and Library collections at NWU LIS*

The collection development and management policy of NWU regulates the collection budget, purchase of information resources, subscription to databases, discarding of resources, discontinuation of subscriptions, and all procedures to be followed in processes related to collection development and management. The three NWU campuses are allocated separate budgets meaning that there is some level of autonomy in terms of purchasing resources for the different campuses. With

Table 1. Public universities in South Africa (Bangani et al., 2018).

| Traditional universities | Comprehensive universities | Universities of technology |
|---|---|---|
| University of Cape Town (UCT) | University of Johannesburg (UJ) | Cape Peninsula University of Technology |
| University of Fort Hare (UFH) | Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) | Central University of Technology |
| University of the Free State (UFS) | University of South Africa (UNISA) | Durban University of Technology |
| University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) | University of Venda (Univen) | Mangosuthu University of Technology |
| University of Limpopo (UL) | Walter Sisulu University | University of Mpumalanga* |
| Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University* | University of Zululand (UniZulu) | Sol Plaatje University* |
| North-West University (NWU) | | Tshwane University of Technology |
| University of Pretoria (UP) | | Vaal University of Technology |
| Rhodes University (RU) | | |
| University of Stellenbosch (SU) | | |
| University of the Western Cape (UWC) | | |
| University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) | | |
| Total | 6 | 8 |

*Newly established university.

reference to the purchasing of books, the policy stipulates that the faculties must make the majority of recommendations to the library through their faculty librarian. The policy, however, allows for some degree of flexibility as faculty librarians can also recommend information resources, in consultation with the faculties in most cases. With regards to indigenous languages, the practice, particularly with Setswana at the MC, is to relax some of the stringent requirements of the policy. In addition, NWU has a Setswana LibGuide written in this language which makes it the only LibGuide written in an African language in the country. Though the policy does not stipulate the preferred age of books that must be purchased, the practice is to purchase books that are not older than three years. Generally, only the latest editions of books are purchased. The procurement policy of the university requires that all companies be registered on the university database of suppliers for the university to procure from them. This policy makes it impossible for the library to purchase material from self-published authors (Shaw, 2012) as the university does not purchase material from individuals. This has affected the ability of the library to purchase Setswana titles from these authors. The matter, however, is receiving attention at the highest levels of library and university management.

In terms of collections, NWU is able to leverage resources from the three campuses, including the four small branches of the PC. There are more than one million cataloged items. This ensures that the NWU LIS is able to meet most needs of its users. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of collections at NWU LIS as provided by the NWU circulation system.

“Others” include audio-visual collections, microfiche, cartographic material, music sounds, newspapers, government publications, pamphlets, and many other small collections. The domination of monographs on the catalog does not give a

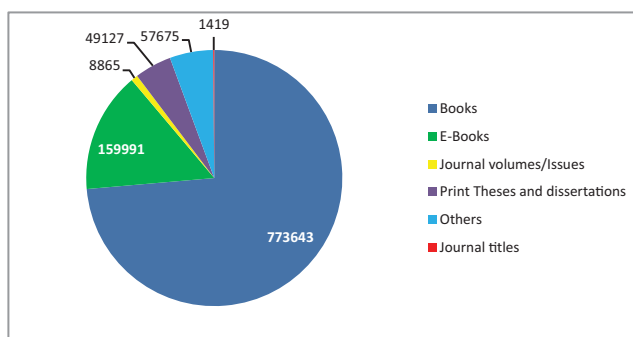


Figure 1. Size of collections at NWU.

complete picture, as the library has access to thousands of journals through 295 subscription and open access databases, as well as 22,748 items on its institutional repository of which journals and theses and dissertations are the dominant content. No library, however, can claim to have the ability to meet the needs of all its users no matter how well stocked it may be.

Each campus of the NWU has a staff member assigned to the function of ILS. They are all placed in the loan services division. However, prior to 2014 at the MC, there was no dedicated staff member who was allocated to the ILS and all staff members in the loan services could request for information resources through ILS.

3.3. Language policy of NWU

South Africa is home to close to 52 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa recognizes 11 official languages in the country, which are Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, SeSotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. These languages are spoken at varying degrees around the country. The predominant language in the North-West Province is Setswana followed by Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, and Xitsonga (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

In terms of higher education, two investigations were commissioned in the early 2000s to advise the then minister of education on the position of Afrikaans in higher education, and another one on the use of indigenous languages as languages of instruction in higher education (South Africa, 2002b; South Africa, 2003). The two investigations separately came up with the recommendations in the Table 2 below.

The recommendations of the two ministerial committees were rejected but the universities were advised to promote the languages in the context of multilingualism. When the NWU formulated its language policy, it took into account the dominant languages of the regions where the university has campuses, and the recommendations of the committees. As a result, the university has three official languages, which are: Setswana, Afrikaans, and English with SeSotho recognized as a working language in the VTC (North-West University, 2012). However, Giliomee (2004),

Table 2. Recommendations of the Ministerial Committee of Education on African languages as mediums of instruction in higher education, and the report on the position of Afrikaans in the university system.

| Languages | Public universities |
|---------------------------|---|
| IsiZulu | UJ, UKZN, NWU, UNISA, Wits, and UniZulu |
| IsiXhosa | UCT, UFH, UFS, NMMU, RU, SU, UNISA, and UWC |
| Afrikaans | CHE and SU |
| Setswana | NWU, UP, and UNISA |
| SeSotho Sa Leboa (Sepedi) | UL, UJ, UP, UNISA, and Univen |
| SeSotho | UCT, UFS, SU, UNISA, and Wits |
| SiSwati | UNISA and UniZulu |
| Tshivenda | UL, UNISA, and Univen |
| IsiNdebele | UP and UNISA |

Ngulube (2012), and Mwaniki (2014) warn that despite Afrikaans and the African languages enjoying official status, they face an uncertain future with Afrikaans losing influence while the indigenous languages continue to be marginalized. Nkondo et al. (2014) maintain that libraries have a role to play in collecting, preserving, promoting and disseminating information written in the indigenous languages of South Africa. Lor (2012) and Ngulube (2012) concur pointing out that this role may include the following:

- collection and documentation of material in marginalized and “at risk” languages,
- hosting author workshops to assist authors to publish in those languages,
- becoming centers for publication of material in those languages,
- purchasing and distributing material in those languages, for example, through ILS, and
- encouraging communities to read in those languages.

Despite the best intentions of public university libraries, they sometimes face challenges (Committee of Higher Education Libraries in South Africa et al., 2014) that are beyond their control which may relegate issues to do with the promotion of multilingualism to the back burner.

3.4. Challenges faced by university libraries in South Africa

Public university libraries in South Africa face a number of challenges which include, budget cuts as a result of decreasing subsidy from the South African government, students’ protests, addition of the VAT on electronic resources, and the depreciation of the Rand against major currencies as a result of the negative global financial outlook and political climate.

The decrease in government subsidy to public universities in South Africa has a long history. It started in the mid-80s after the government introduced a new formula to calculate the government subsidy (Buchanan, 2008). Faced with financial challenges, universities sliced the budgets of university libraries and passed some of the costs to students. Starting from 2009, the world faced a financial crisis which resulted in the decreased purchasing power of the South African Rand against the

major world currencies. These combined with a decision by the South African government to add VAT on electronic resources led to a crisis for public university libraries in the country (Wild, 2016) as library budgets lost 40% of their purchasing power (Committee of Higher Education Libraries in South Africa et al., 2014). VAT would increase from 14% to 15% in 2018 further decreasing the purchasing power of libraries (Ensor, 2018). Universities, in turn, faced resistance from the students when they tried to pass the costs by hiking students' fees (Quintal, 2015). Students demanded fee free education and the extension of library hours to 24 hours (Chizwina, Bangani, & Moyo, 2016), among other demands. The results of this crisis would see several public universities cancelling journal titles and certain databases, and resorting to using ILS and open access databases for some of their academic content (Dean & Myeza, 2017; Webster & Moyo, 2016).

3.5. ILS as an act of Ubuntu

Ubuntu is an African philosophical term that is based on the principle that “umntu ngumntu ngabantu” in Nguni languages (IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, SiSwati, and IsiNdebele), while in Sotho languages (SeSotho, Setswana, and SeSotho Sa Lebowa) it is translated as “motho ke motho ka batho”. The literal meaning of this principle in English is that a “person is a person because of others.” The concept is based on the values of sharing, caring, compassion, redress, empathy, helpfulness, togetherness, oneness, humanness, kindness, reconciliation, and other positive human attributes. In the context of libraries, this concept can be used to mean that libraries depend on other libraries to be complete. Libraries that are bigger and better equipped in information resources have a moral obligation to share with their poorer cousins for the benefit of the users and the country (Raju et al., 2017). In the context of South Africa, ILS can also be associated with redress and reconciliation. Buchanan (2008) points out that previously, Black students were not allowed to borrow material from better resourced “White universities” via ILS. This applied even to campuses of the same university in cases where the university had campuses that tolerated Blacks. ILS in the country is meant to level the playing field among libraries irrespective of the type, history, or kind of library.

4. Objectives

The aim of this paper is to analyze trends, language, and use of ILS as a collection development tool in public universities in South Africa, particularly, at the NWU during a difficult period in the life of academic libraries in the country. The objectives are to

- establish trends of usage of ILS,
- determine the type and fill rate of documents requested and supplied via ILL,
- establish the origin of supplying and requesting libraries,
- establish the language of documents requested through ILS, and
- establish the use of ILS as a collection development tool.

5. Literature review

Relevant studies have been conducted in various countries (Ania & Peter, 2013; Bean and Rigby, 2011; Gaffney, 2012; Gee, 2014; Glover & Glover, 2016; Grevatt, 2015; Huang, 2015; Jamali, Nooshinfard, Baghestani, & Asadi, 2010; Ostos & Gardinier, 2018; Panda & Mallappa, 2015; Porat, 2001, 2008; Porat & Shoham, 2004; Qian & Yu, 2013; Schmidt, 2014; Stapel, 2016; Tella & Sidiq, 2018; Tyler, Melvin, Xu, Epp, & Kreps, 2011) and South Africa (Bangani et al., 2018; Le Roux & Cassells, 2018; Lor, 1987; Mwaniki, 2014; Raubenheimer & Van Niekerk, 2002, 2015; Shaw, 2012 </link>).

Porat (2001) points out that statistics generated through the ILS automated systems can be used to determine the language of documents requested. This is very crucial in the South African context that has a history of general marginalization of African languages, particularly at public universities. The researcher followed this assertion with a co-authored study that sought to determine the language of documents, among others, requested in Israeli universities (Porat & Shoham, 2004). The findings of this study were that 75% of requests were for the Hebrew language documents. The Israeli universities, however, supplied mainly English language documents to foreign countries. Porat (2008) conducted another study and observed that although ILS requests were decreasing, the requests for non-English language documents were on the increase, especially in the humanities. Another finding was that non-native Hebrew speakers, especially those whose first language is English, Spanish, Russian, or Arabic preferred to request material in those languages. In China, Qian and Yu (2013) report an agreement between the national library and the BALIS interlibrary loans service that reached an agreement to loan Chinese language books and foreign language titles published within the last 3–20 years free of charge to users, presumably, in order to promote the languages. Mwaniki's (2014) study used the language of research outputs at the University of the Free State, a former Afrikaans university, and realized that Afrikaans influence was waning, while English was now the dominant language in that institution. In 2002, the percentage of Afrikaans research outputs to English was 22.6%–77.4%, but by 2008, the Afrikaans numbers had plummeted to 12.9%–87.1%. Not a single research document was published in an African language at that university between 2000 and 2008.

A study conducted in Iran by Jamali et al. (2010) found indifferent results while researching trends on usage of ILS services. The majority of items requested were journal articles followed by books. Tyler et al. (2011) studied whether book purchases triggered by ILL requests circulate better than those who were purchased through faculty recommendations and other avenues. They found that book purchases triggered by ILL tend to be good value for money. Bean and Rigby (2011) studied whether collaboration between the reference section of the library and the ILL section results to the filling of hard to find material at the University of Oregon Library. They concluded that the collaboration had been a success. Of the 50 requests that were sent to faculty librarians, 29 were purchased. Fifteen of those requests were canceled, while four were filled via the interlibrary loans. In Germany, a study

by Ania and Peter (2013) determined that out of 33,925 requests that were made via ILL, only 13,321 (or 39.3%) conformed to the collection development policy. Out of the 13,321 items, 2,167 were eventually purchased which represents 6.4% of all requests made. Gaffney (2012) studied the use of ILS at the University of Delaware in the United States, and determined that more than 23% of all requests were cancelled. More than 70% of the cancelled requests were for locally available resources, an exercise which was deemed expensive and time consuming for ILS staff. Gee (2014) researched impact of the use of ILS data to purchase books and found that 57% of the purchased books, 1,385, have circulated at least once over an eight year period. 57% of the overall circulated books circulated for more than two times. Gee (2014) further notes that not all titles were purchased as some of the titles did not conform to the collection development policy of the East Carolina University Library. Schmidt (2014) studied ILL in Mexican, Caribbean, Central American, and South American Libraries. In terms of trends, the results of this study were mixed as 30% of libraries reported a decrease on ILL requests, while 27% reported an increase. Duy and Larivière (2014) studied ILL in relation to research activities in Canada. They found the relationship between ILL borrowing and research activity to be significantly positive. Panda and Mallappa (2015) conducted an ILS study in India and noticed that ILS requests decreased from 2011 to 2015. The highest number of requests and supplies emanated from the regions with the highest number of universities (the Southern and Northern regions). Huang (2015) reports on the use of ILS data for collection development and found that the purchasing of books was cheaper than requesting them through ILS when considering the extent of use of those books. The other advantage noted by researchers (Gee, 2014; Huang, 2015) was that the books remain in the collection of the library unlike the ILS requests that have to be returned. Grevatt (2015) studied ILL trends at the Albertsons Library at Boise State University from 2010 to 2015 and found that the ILL request rates were in decline. Between 2010 and 2015, the ILL requests had decreased by close to 34%. Stapel (2016) studied the trends in ILS usage in the Netherlands and found that ILS requests had decreased by more than 69% between 2006 and 2015. There were more requests for articles than books. The fill rate was 81% for monographs and 91% for articles.

Knowlton, Kristanciuk, and Jabaily (2016) warn that libraries that cancel information resources cannot rely on ILS as an alternative to the availability of the resources in their local libraries. Information resources requested via ILS face delays and this service may frustrate users who prefer instant access to the resources. The inconveniences associated with ILS services means that ILS data cannot be relied upon to determine the impact of resource cancellations as users may simply decide to abandon the quest for resources if such resources are not locally available. Ostos and Gardinier (2018) studied the total number of Spanish books shared through ILL from 2011 to 2015 at the Pennsylvania State University and the University of Iowa in the United States. They found that out of 107,351 materials requested via ILL at Pennsylvania State University only 1129 or 1.1% were for Spanish language material. At the University of Iowa, 92,186 books were requested via ILL during this period and only 1788 or 1.9% of materials were Spanish language material. However,

Spanish language material ILL's defied trends as they increased from 225 in 2011 to 256 in 2015 at the Pennsylvania State University. At the University of Iowa, the increase was more dramatic from 313 in 2011 to 457 in 2015. Glover and Glover (2016) studied trends in ILL by the National Health Service libraries in the NW of England from 2005 to 2015 and found that the requests and supplies had decreased sharply. There was a decrease of close to 81% of requests for articles from 45,147 in 2005/2006 to 8,642 in 2014/2015. Requests for monographs stood at 5,627 in 2005/2006 to 3,732 in 2014/2015, a decrease by close to 34%. Glover and Glover (2016) identified the increase in open access and online subscriptions to journals as possible causes of this sharp decrease in ILL activities. In Nigeria, Tella and Sidiq (2018) researched ILL trends in Academic Libraries in Kwara State and found that most requests were for books and articles. The most popular methods of requesting were: emails, personal contact, Facebook, and Twitter.

As early as 1987, P. Lor conducted probably the first ILS study in South Africa. In this study, Lor found that 80.1% of requests sent were filled, while 75% of requests received were filled. The majority of supplying and requesting libraries came from present day GP followed by the WC, KZN, EC, and FS. In 2002, Raubenheimer and Van Niekerk also found that most supplies and requests emanated from GP and WC. Raubenheimer and Van Niekerk (2015) studied ILL in South Africa from 2006 to 2014 and found that the rate of requests decreased. Overall, there were more requests for monographs than articles since 2008 due to the impact of technology. Likewise, Bangani et al. (2018) studied ILL trends at the NWU from 2006 to 2016 and found that both requests from NWU and by NWU had decreased during this period. The authors attributed some of the decrease to the strengthening of IRS at the university. It was also determined that most requests originated from consortiums that fall within the most urbanized provinces. With regards to publishing, Le Roux and Cassells (2018) determined that English was absolutely dominant followed by Afrikaans. Le Roux and Cassells (2018) noted that there is very little publishing in African languages in the country. The situation is different, however, when self-published authors are considered (Shaw, 2012). Shaw (2012) points out that from 2001 to 2010, the National Library of South Africa's Centre for the Book sponsored 49 self-published titles in African languages, 34 in English and 5 in Afrikaans. Out of the 49 African languages titles, however, only 4 were in Setswana. Shaw (2012) called for more writers in the under-represented African languages to apply for the National Library of South Africa's Centre for the Book grant.

6. Methodology

This is a quantitative study that uses ILS data from the NWU to fulfill its objectives. Quantitative is derived from the word quantity which means amount or number (Soanes & Stevenson, 2008, p. 1174). In simple terms, therefore, quantitative research means research measured by numbers. Bryman and Bell (2015, pp. 174–176) sums it up by indicating that quantitative studies are preoccupied with quantification of data using mathematical and statistical measurements to

collect and analyze data. Specifically, this study employs bibliometrics research methods to fulfill its objectives. Bibliometrics are “quantitative research methods used to measure, track, and analyze print-based scholarly literature” (Roemer and Borchardt, 2015, p. 27).

ILL data was downloaded from the SABINET ILL system using the three NWU JC codes. In the case of IRS, the data was obtained from the annual reports of the three campus libraries. The titles of books requested were obtained from the monthly reports of the ILS librarian of the MC of NWU. The ILL and IRS data was then collated and uploaded on five Excel spreadsheets for analysis and interpretation. The first spreadsheet dealt with numbers of ILL requests by NWU, ILL requests from NWU, and IRS requests by the various campuses of NWU. The second spreadsheet dealt with the types of documents requested by NWU from other libraries, that is, whether they are monographs or articles, and the fill rates of such documents. The third spreadsheet was about the types of documents requested from NWU using similar columns to the second spreadsheet. The fourth spreadsheet detailed the origin of requesting libraries by province or country in the case of other countries. These details were obtained from the SABINET booklet of JC Codes. These were then analyzed and interpreted using tables and graphs from Excel. In terms of language and use of ILS data as a collection development tool, the list of all books requested in 2015 and 2016 was obtained from the MC ILS librarian, and the titles were also uploaded on Excel for easy counting. The researchers then checked the books against the list of book orders initiated by librarians using the ILS data. Further, the books were checked against the library catalog to ascertain their availability. The determination of language of books was done by simple counting and categorizing the language of books that are not written in English.

7. Findings and discussions

Figure 2 depicts the trends in usage of ILS at NWU from 2012 to 2016.

NWU made 16,316 requests to other libraries during this period and NWU dealt with 23,891 requests from other libraries which is 7,575 more than the number of requests by NWU. This attests to the amount of trust that other libraries have on

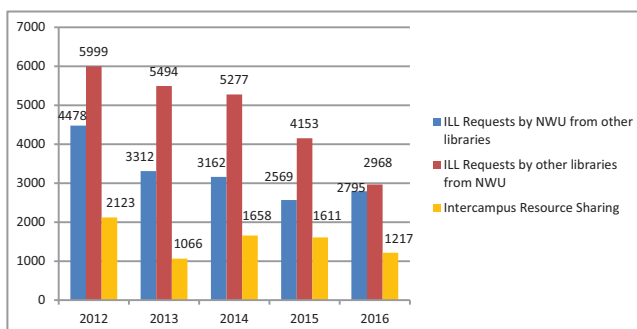


Figure 2. Trends in usage of ILS at NWU (2012–2016).

NWU (Bangani et al., 2018). In terms of IRS, the campuses exchanged more information resources in 2012 than any other year. The lower number of IRS exchanges between the NWU Campuses compared to ILL went against the current researchers' expectations that these numbers will be higher than those of ILL given the size of the collections at the university. The strengthening of IRS between the NWU campuses, therefore, did not contribute significantly to the decrease in ILL activities (Bangani et al., 2018). This confirms earlier assertions in this study that the collection development practices of the various NWU campuses were not aligned. Another surprising trend was the general decrease in usage of ILS. The initial expectation was that ILS will be on the ascendancy given the budget cuts, addition of VAT, and the global financial crisis that converged to cause havoc to libraries. This was despite the increase in student numbers and research outputs at NWU. The student numbers increased from 58,752 in 2012 to 63,395 in 2016 (North-West University, 2017a). The research outputs increased from 869 article equivalents in 2012 to 1,250 in 2015 (2016 (North-West University, 2017b)). The initial impression of these results appears to disagree with Duy and Larivière (2014) on the positive relationship between ILL and research activities. If other variables are not considered, these results may be interpreted to reflect a lack of relationship between research outputs and students' numbers. However, when considering the fact that there is a general decrease in ILL activities in South Africa (Raubenheimer & Van Niekerk, 2015), the decrease noticed in this study may be interpreted as a reflection of the extent to which open access and other technologies have had an effect on ILS services in the country. Marginal increases in student numbers and research outputs of a single university, therefore, may be overshadowed by the other variables. It is only when ILL activities are studied in relation to other universities that a true reflection of this relationship can be noticed as will be shown under Table 3. Glover and Glover (2016), Grevatt (2015), Panda and Mallappa (2015), Stapel (2016), and Bangani et al. (2018) also noticed decreases in ILS usage in their respective studies. Earlier studies (Calvert & Fleming, 2013; Knowlton et al., 2016; Nash & McElfresh, 2016) have also shown that ILS is a poor indicator of the impact of budget cuts and journal cancellations given the researchers' preference for what they have in their local libraries, a phenomenon associated with the principle of least effort in citation theory (Wallace

Table 3. Origin and percentage of materials supplied and requested by NWU by province and country.

| South African Province | % of material supplied | % of material requested |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| GP | 56.3 | 59 |
| WC | 26.9 | 20.7 |
| KZN | 5 | 7.4 |
| FS | 4.3 | 7 |
| EC | 4 | 4.6 |
| NW | 2 | 0.1 |
| LP | 0.3 | 1 |
| MP | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Other countries | | |
| Botswana, Namibia, & Swaziland | 1.1 | 0.1 |

& Van Fleet, 2012, p. 259). Other reasons for the decrease in the usage of this service include technology and the effects of open access (Raubenheimer & Van Niekerk, 2015).

7.1. Type and fill rates of documents supplied and requested via ILL (2012–2016)

Figure 3 depicts the type and fill rates of material supplied to NWU by other libraries via ILL.

75.61% of requests by NWU were satisfied. The high fill rates attest to the collective strength of libraries that are part of the Southern African Bibliographic Information Network. The more frequently requested documents by NWU are monographs but articles have a better fill rate at 81.1%. The results of this study are somewhat in agreement with those of the Nigerian study (Tella & Sidiq, 2018), which also found more requests for monographs than articles. These results, however, are completely at odds with Glover and Glover (2016) who observed that more articles were requested in England than monographs. The possible reason for the lesser number of article requests is improvements in technology and the effects of open access (Raubenheimer & Van Niekerk, 2015). Public universities in South Africa subscribe to a high volume of journals through databases and the vast majority also host institutional repositories (Raju et al., 2017). Lor (1987) also found results that are somewhat in agreement to the current study. Lor's study found that the fill rate for requested material was 80.1%. Unlike the Netherlands (Stapel, 2016), more monographs were requested than articles. Figure 4 shows the type and fill rates of material requested from NWU by other libraries.

NWU was able to satisfy 47.62% of requests. The low fill rates of documents requested from NWU is completely at odds with Lor (1987) who determined fill rates to be at 75%. This suggests a need to improve on the side of NWU. The ILL request system in South Africa allows the requesting library to request to several libraries that hold an item concurrently. Requests are only sent to libraries that hold the item. Once the request has been activated, any library can fill the request among those libraries. Libraries that are slower to respond may accumulate a high rate of unfilled requests. Unfilled requests, therefore, are a reflection of the response rate of

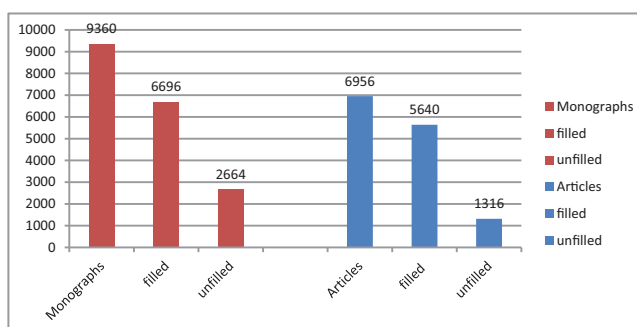


Figure 3. Type and fill rates of documents supplied to NWU by other libraries (2012–2016).

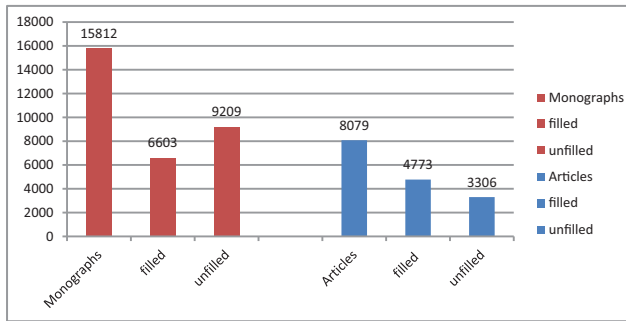


Figure 4. Type and fill rates of documents requested from NWU by other libraries (2012–2016).

a library. It is possible, however, that the majority of the items requested are indicated as unfilled due to cancellations. Gaffney (2012) found very high levels of cancellations of ILS requests in the United States. NWU sent 11,376 items to other libraries while they sent 12,336 documents to NWU. In terms of its “reciprocity score,” therefore, NWU is at a negative at -960 which shows signs that NWU is a net borrower, that is, it borrows more than it lends (American Library Association 2016; Buchanan, 2008).

7.2. Origin of supplying and requesting libraries

Table 3 depicts the origin and percentage of material supplied by other libraries to NWU by province, and the origin and percentage of material requested by NWU from other libraries by province.

It is interesting that the top five supplying and requesting provinces have not changed since Lor (1987) conducted the first comprehensive study of ILL in South Africa. The only change that can be noticed is the change of position between EC and FS. Lor’s study, however, was based on ILL requests for the whole country not just one university; as the current study focuses on one university, the positions from number 3 to number 5 may change depending on the origin of the ILL data being analyzed. These results also show a positive relationship between the concentration of universities, their research standing, and the extent of ILL requests (Bangani et al., 2018). These findings are consistent with Panda and Mallappa (2015) who found that the regions with the highest concentration of universities supply and request more material. Provinces whose universities are not yet fully fledged performed poorly as shown by the absence of NC and the poor performance of Mpumalanga on this table. These findings are also consistent with Bangani et al. (2018) and Duy and Larivière (2014). There is a positive relationship between ILL and research activities.

7.3. Language of documents and use of ILS as a collection development tool

Due to the high number of ILS requests for material that is already available in the library (Gaffney, 2012), the MC changed its ILS workflow towards the end of 2014.

Table 4. Language representation of ILS requests by NWU (MC) from other libraries (2015–2016).

| Language | Official status at NWU |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| English | Yes |
| Setswana | Yes |
| Afrikaans | Yes |
| English-Afrikaans | Yes |
| English-Greek | Yes–No |

Library users were encouraged to consult their faculty librarian before undergoing the ILS route. The ILS librarian was also required to send monthly reports with details of all titles requested through ILS to the faculty librarians to assist them with collection development. Bean and Rigby (2011) reports on a similar experience at the University of Oregon Library. The ILL workflow was also changed at that university to include the faculty librarians. The other two campuses of NWU (VTC and PC) did not change their processes in line with the MC, hence the use of data of this campus only to establish the language of monographs requested and the extent to which the titles requested ended up being purchased by the library. The Table 4 below depicts the language representation of documents requested through ILS.

It is encouraging to note that all NWU official languages (North-West University 2012) are represented on requests of monographs by NWU library users. The only concern is the absence of SeSotho from the list which holds the status of a working language especially at the VTC. The marginalization of African languages as pointed out by Ngulube (2012) and the possible demise of Afrikaans pointed out by Giliomee (2004) and Mwaniki (2014) are not noticeable at this stage. Figure 5 gives a more complete picture.

The graph above reflects that English is very dominant at the NWU (MC). Setswana books requested through ILS represent only 0.94% of all requests. Only 1.5 documents requested were in Afrikaans, which represents 0.28% of all requests. The results are somewhat similar to those of the United States of America where Spanish material represented less than 2% of all requests at the Pennsylvania State University and University of Iowa (Ostos & Gardinier, 2018). The results of this

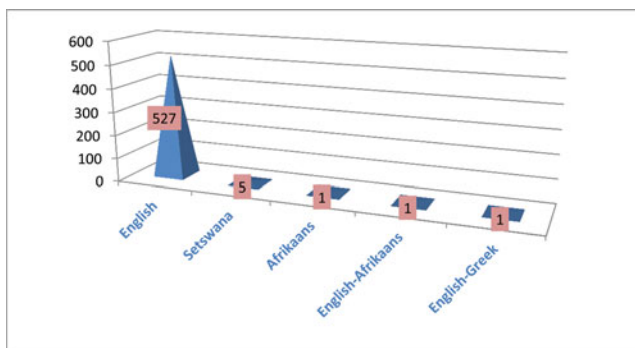


Figure 5. Number of documents representing languages on ILS requests by NWU (MC only) (2014–2015).

study may be interpreted to show that there's a gap between the language/s preferred by researchers and the policy of the University (Mwaniki, 2014). However, this may also be a reflection of a lack of relevant resources in African languages – a situation that is worsened by the inability of academic libraries to purchase material from the self-published authors. As a result, the policy of NWU to be a multilingual-multicultural university is not reflected by what its researchers prefer to request via ILS. The results of this study are consistent with those of Mwaniki (2014) who found that English is an absolutely dominant language at the University of the Free State with Afrikaans losing influence. It is the view of the current researchers that internationalization (Mwaniki, 2014), the culture of ranking of researchers and universities which emphasizes citations, and the lack of resources and incentives to write and publish in African languages are the major causes of the current low status enjoyed by African languages in the academy. These results are, however, in disagreement with Porat (2008) who found that English, Spanish, Russian, or Arabic speakers mainly requested documents in those languages in Israeli universities. Despite the MC of NWU being dominated by Batswana speakers, most requests were for documents in English. This not only attests to the general low regard for African languages in public universities in South Africa (Ngulube, 2012) but also to the lack of relevant information resources in these languages (Le Roux & Cassells, 2018). Ngulube's (2012) assertions that African languages are marginalized is thus confirmed. Giliomee's (2004) argument that Afrikaans is losing influence is also partially confirmed. It is possible that Afrikaans has far more influence at the former Afrikaans university campus of NWU which is Potchefstroom, and to a certain extent the VTC. It is, however, confirmed that its influence is waning at the MC of NWU.

The titles supplied to MC by other libraries through ILS were considered by faculty librarians for collection development purposes. Figure 6 shows the results.

The list provided by the ILS librarian at Mafikeng shows that there were 535 book titles requested via ILS. Faculty librarians found that 138 (or 25.8%) of those titles conform to the collection development policy of the Campus and therefore added them to the collection. The above figures are an underestimation of the actual number of titles that were purchased using the ILS data. In some cases, faculty librarians



Figure 6. ILS as a collection development tool at NWU (MC) (2015–2016).

used the data to identify gaps in the collection and purchased titles that were not reflected on the ILS list of titles. Three hundred and ninety seven titles were not purchased for various reasons including the fact that they did not conform to the collection development policy of the university (Gee, 2014). Some of those titles were dated and out-of-print. In some instances, the researchers insisted on requesting old copies of titles that the library already has new editions of. In their study, Ania and Peter (2013) also found that the majority of items requested via ILS were old and therefore did not conform to the collection development policy. At the University of Oregon Library, Bean and Rigby (2011) found differently. Twenty-nine titles out of 50 (or 58%) were purchased at that university. This study, however, was carried out a few months after the start of the program. It is possible that this trend changed overtime. The results of this study also differ with those of Ania and Peter (2013) in Germany who found that only 6.4% of all requests were purchased using ILL data despite the fact that 39.3% requests conformed to the collection development policy. Some editions of titles of books that were requested via ILS at the NWU were superseded by new ones. In such cases, the librarians purchased the new editions in line with the collection development policy of the university. It was observed that many titles that were purchased using the ILS data were taken out during the course of the study suggesting high usage. Ania and Peter (2013); Gee (2014); Tyler et al. (2011) also make similar observations with regards to items purchased using ILS data. The items tend to have a higher than normal circulation rate. The other observation was that library users requested a number of old, possibly out-of-print, books through ILS, with the oldest title, “The romantic movement in English poetry” by Arthur Symons, published in 1909; followed by “The theory of economic development: and inquiry into profits, capital, credit, interest and the business cycle,” by J. A. Schumpete published in 1935; and “English romantic poetry and prose” by R. Noyes published in 1956. All these were requested from the PC by PhD students in economics and English, respectively. This is in agreement with Van Dyk (2014) who posited that ILS plays a vital role in finding old and out-of-print titles. Bean and Rigby (2011) also observed that ILS assists users to get hard-to-locate items. Without ILS, it would have been impossible for the MC of NWU to locate these old books as they are long out-of-print.

8. Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study concerned the unavailability of complete data of the titles requested by the campuses of NWU via ILS from SABINET and the University. This forced the researchers to use the MC data only to determine language of documents and the use of ILS as a collection development tool. The system currently deployed at NWU does not provide the history of “checkouts” of books. Therefore, the current researchers were unable to study the usage patterns of books requested via ILS. This would have assisted with determining the value of ILS as a collection development tool.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the study findings above, it can be concluded that ILS usage statistics had decreased sharply over the past years. This is despite the general cuts in budgets, and the introduction of 15% VAT on e-resources, among other challenges. Together with the increase of student numbers and research outputs (North-West University, 2017a; 2017b), these were expected to result in high rates of material exchange. The results of this study depict a positive relationship between the concentration of universities, their research standing, and the extent of ILL requests. The study findings also reveal that monographs had higher rates of requests than articles, although the latter had better fill rates than the former. This can be attributed to the fact that library users have more article options online than in a print only scenario, and may include the impact of open access (Glover & Glover, 2016; Raubenheimer & Van Niekerk, 2015). This may also be a reflection of a lack of relevant resources in African languages in South Africa (Le Roux & Cassells, 2018). The findings further suggest that requests for English language materials dominated the number of documents representing languages on ILS requests by NWU MC in 2015–2016 ahead of Setswana and Afrikaans, which are the other official languages of the university. It can, therefore, be concluded that the two languages were losing influence (Giliomee, 2004; Ngulube, 2012, Mwaniki, 2014). The study findings further reveal that Faculty Librarians used ILS requests to discover collection gaps and fill them through acquisition of new resources. It can thus be concluded that ILS requests can be very helpful in collection development and management, particularly the identification of gaps in one's collection (Gee, 2014; Huang, 2015). This study also revealed that ILS is invaluable when it comes to sourcing old materials that are out-of-print. The results of this study show that the provinces with the most research intensive universities supplied and requested more resources compared to the provinces with lower intensity research institutions (Panda & Mallappa, 2015) or new institutions such as MP and NC.

The results of this study have wider implications for academic libraries in South Africa and other countries. These results reveal that ILS data is not a reliable measure of the impact of resource cancellations as researchers simply adapt to the available resources in their local library (Knowlton et al., 2016). This means that using ILS data only to determine the impact of such cancellations may not give a correct picture. The second implication is that libraries need to adopt strategies for the development and promotion of African languages (Lor, 2012; Ngulube, 2012; Nkondo et al., 2014) as shown by the poor representation of indigenous languages on the ILS requests. Failure to develop African languages may render universities and libraries at odds with the aspirations of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996), and the National Development Plan which proposes that every South African citizen should study at least one of the nine official African languages (South Africa, 2012, p. 472). The results of this study also reveal that libraries can use ILS as an effective tool to fill the collection gaps.

In order to address the past imbalances and promote the values of Ubuntu, the two newly formed universities in MP and NC must be encouraged to participate fully in the Southern African Bibliographic Network ILL scheme in order to ensure that those two provinces also benefit from the scheme. Perhaps another comprehensive and in-depth countrywide study similar to the one conducted by Lor in 1987, may help reveal a country status of ILS patterns, with a view to initiate discussions of this kind at the national level. Another recommendation would be the beginning of a discussion by libraries at the national level on the strategies that must be adopted to collect, preserve, promote, disseminate, develop, and publish resources in marginalized languages that are a critical part of the national heritage of the country. One strategy is to purchase indigenous African languages books from self-published authors (Shaw, 2012) which may require deviation from the normal university procurement policies. Government and public universities should consider providing incentives to researchers who publish in languages other than English and Afrikaans in order to increase materials in African languages.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Ms Motlalepula Baas, the ILL librarian at NWU-Mafikeng Campus, for providing us with some of the data used in this study. The insights of the two anonymous reviewers are greatly appreciated.

ORCID

Siviwe Bangani  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5872-8123>

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